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Interest Group Influence on Political Parties in Western Democracies

Interest Group Influence on Political Parties in Western Democracies

Maiken Røed

LUND
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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Abstract
This thesis asks when and why interest groups influence political parties. I address this question in two ways: 1) by examining the organizational ties between parties and interest groups, given that party-interest group ties may constitute an important step on groups' way to influence, and 2) by more directly examining interest group influence on parties. By doing this, the thesis contributes to the literatures on interest group influence, party positions, and party-interest group ties.

Paper I examines the relationship between private and public party finance and party-interest group organizational ties. The paper lends systematic support to the idea that groups and parties are more likely to maintain closer relationships today when the groups donate money. The institutional setting the actors operate in may furthermore affect ties.

Paper II gives an overview of the Party-Interest Group Relationships in Contemporary Democracies (PAIR-DEM) datasets, and presents descriptive results regarding the organizational ties parties and interest groups maintain today.

Paper III considers the relationship between parties' goals and interest group influence on parties. I find that interest groups are more likely to perceive that they influence parties they are ideologically similar to as well as parties that are more willing to compromise on policy. Interest groups' access to parties moreover seems to be an important mechanism here.

Paper IV asks whether organizational ties affect one-sided interest group influence on parties as well as mutual party-interest group influence. We find positive correlations between stronger ties and both types of influence.

Paper V asks when parties listen to interest groups and adopt their input. I find that parties are more likely to do this when 1) the issue in question is less publicly salient, 2) parties emphasize the issue more than their competitors, 3) the interest group input is supported by a larger and/or more coordinated interest group coalition, and 4) parties are in opposition.

Key words
interest groups, political parties, interest group influence, organizational ties

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List of papers

I **All about the money? A cross-national study of parties' relations with trade unions in 12 western democracies.**
E. H. Allern, V. W. Hansen, S. Otjes, A. Rasmussen, M. Røed, and T. Bale
Party Politics, 27(3), 407-417. 2021.

II **Introducing the Party-Interest Group Relationships in Contemporary Democracies (PAIRDEM) Datasets.**
E. H. Allern, V. W. Hansen, L. Rødland, and M. Røed
Manuscript.

III **Party goals and interest group influence on parties.**
M. Røed
West European Politics, online first. 2021.

IV **Party-Interest Group Ties and Patterns of Political Influence.**
M. Røed, E. H. Allern, and V. W. Hansen
Manuscript.

V **When Do Political Parties Listen to Interest Groups?**
M. Røed
Manuscript.

Interest Group Influence on Political Parties in Western Democracies

1 Introduction

This thesis concerns interest group influence on political parties. While an old and persistent claim in the party literature is that parties are in decline (see Andeweg & Farrell (2017) for an overview), they are still central actors in election campaigns, legislatures, as well as governments, and individual legislators generally toe the party line in most established democracies (Sieberer, 2006; Dalton et al., 2011; Coman, 2015). Given their prominent decision-making role, paying attention to parties is likely pertinent for interest groups that seek to influence public policy. Interest groups are indeed known to contact, seek access to, and build relationships with political parties (Binderkrantz, 2005; Allern, 2010; Rasmussen & Lindeboom, 2013; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017). Understanding when interest groups influence parties can in other words shed light on how public policy comes about.

Studies on interest groups in general tend to focus on groups' *access* to political actors (e.g., Hansen, 1991; Bouwen, 2004; Binderkrantz & Pedersen, 2017), while the growing literature on interest groups and parties in particular focuses on the *organizational ties* between these actors (e.g., Allern, 2010; Rasmussen & Lindeboom, 2013; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017; Allern & Bale, 2017; Allern et al., 2021; Berkhout et al., 2021). This is partly because it is easier to measure access than influence (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Dür, 2008; Bernhagen et al., 2014). Having access and ties can moreover be important prerequisites for influence (Truman, 1951; Binderkrantz & Pedersen, 2017). In recent decades, however, and despite measurement difficulties, the study of interest group influence has had a revival. These studies' main concern is interest groups' influence on individual legislators, governments, and public policy outcomes in the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) (Hojnacki et al., 2012). Only a handful of studies concern interest group influence on parties (Clifton, 2004; Karol, 2009; Victor & Reinhardt, 2018).

This relative neglect may be a result of the empirical context in these studies. Parties have been or are weaker and less cohesive in the EU and the US than e.g. at the national level in Western European countries (Hix et al., 2005; Sieberer, 2006; Coman, 2015). The "common wisdom" in the literature is that weaker parties allow for stronger interest group

influence on the political agenda and on public policy outcomes (Schlozman & Tierney, 1986, 201; see also Schattschneider, 1948). Given the permeating role of parties in politics, however, interest groups can find it easier to influence the agenda and policy outcomes if they also have parties – whether they are weaker or stronger – on their side. Studying interest group influence on parties is hence important to understand groups' broader political influence in democracies.

Parties are moreover central intermediary organizations between citizens and the state. Substantive representation – that public policy makers reflect citizens' preferences – to a certain extent hinges on parties (Powell, 2004; Dalton et al., 2011). Interest groups also function as intermediaries. They aggregate their constituents' interests and concerns on issues, work out possible policy responses, and present their policy frames to political decision makers, including parties (Hansen, 1991). Depending on who their constituents are, the policy frames groups present can reflect broader public interests or narrower sectional ones. Interest groups can in other words affect the link between citizens and the parties they influence (Lax & Phillips, 2012; Giger & Klüver, 2016; De Bruycker & Rasmussen, 2021). This impact on the representative function of parties is an additional reason to study interest group influence on parties.

This thesis therefore asks when and why interest groups influence parties. I address this question in two ways: 1) by examining the organizational ties between parties and interest groups, given that such ties may constitute an important step on groups' way to influence, and 2) by more directly examining interest group influence on parties. In particular, the thesis investigates when interest groups perceive that they have influenced parties, and when parties listen to interest groups. By answering this research question, the thesis contributes to the literatures on interest group influence, party positions, and party-interest group ties.

Empirically, the thesis shows that organizational ties – such as joint conferences and regular meetings – between parties and interest groups are prevalent in many established democracies today. Previous studies on this are either limited to a few countries or specific parties and interest groups (e.g., Allern, 2010; Rasmussen & Lindeboom, 2013). Using interest group as well as party survey data from up to 19 countries where a wide range of parties and interest groups are included, this thesis finds that some party-group pairs have relatively strong, formal ties and many have weaker, less formal ties.

Using different measures of interest group influence, the thesis furthermore shows that interest groups influence parties. This adds to the literature on party positions which to a limited extent takes the impact of interest groups on (the content of) parties' positions into account (see Adams, 2012; Fagerholm, 2016). In addition, the thesis finds that more closely connected interest groups and parties are more likely to *mutually* influence each other. This implies that parties are active participants in their interactions with interest groups and that closer party-interest group relationships likely involve give-and-take. Influence may in other words be more dynamic than how it usually is portrayed in the literature on interest group influence (Hojnacki et al., 2012).

Theoretically, the thesis proposes new explanations for party-interest group ties as well

as interest group influence on parties. First, considering the institutional setting that parties and interest groups operate in, and more specifically the amount of public subsidies that parties receive as well as state regulations of private donations to parties, can be important to explain party-interest group ties. This contributes to the party-interest group literature which focuses on the impact of the resources interest groups and parties can exchange on ties but less on how institutional constraints may create more or less favorable environments for such exchanges.

Second, to explain interest group influence on parties, the thesis highlights the importance of party characteristics. Parties may for example have different goal priorities which can affect interest groups' ability to wield influence. Whether parties are in government or opposition can furthermore affect their propensity to listen to interest groups. This adds to the interest group influence literature at large which generally treats the actors that interest groups try to influence as though they are homogeneous when they are of the same type. This thesis shows that considering differences between actors of the same type (here, political parties) can be important to understand interest group influence.

Methodologically, the thesis uses a novel approach to measure influence. Measuring influence is difficult. The current main approaches in the literature include process tracing, asking interest groups and other political actors about their own or others' influence, and assessing interest groups' preference attainment (Dür, 2008). This thesis shows that using a semi-automated text reuse approach can be useful as well and sets out how this can be done. More specifically, I use this approach to examine whether parties reuse substantive interest group arguments in their legislative speeches and committee remarks. While this approach is not without drawbacks, it nevertheless has some advantages over the current approaches and it enables analysis of a large number of interest groups and parties (or other political actors) as well as a large number of specific policy proposals (or other outcomes).

The thesis' findings may on the one hand be interpreted as a zero-sum game where interest groups' influence comes at the expense of parties. When interest groups win (influence parties), parties lose. If parties without interest group interference "tend to take a moderate view of public policy; they aim at inclusiveness, are hospitable and catholic", while interest groups organize "minorities, usually minorities sharply distinguished from all others, i.e., the *special* interests" (Schattschneider, 1948, 17-18), this type of zero-sum interpretation becomes apparent. Interest group influence leads parties away from moderate views that cater to majorities – which under certain conditions allow for vote maximization in two-party systems (Downs, 1957) – towards representing special interests. On the other hand, however, interest groups and parties may *mutually benefit* from their interactions. Interest group influence on parties does not necessarily come at parties' expense. Both actors may get closer to achieving their goals by interacting. Interest groups gain political traction for their views and parties can bolster their policy positions as well as their appeal to specific constituents to maintain or improve their vote shares.

This latter interpretation is the more probable one. Parties face constraints on the positions they can credibly take without losing integrity and confusing and repelling voters,

demobilizing party activists, and triggering internal divisions (Budge, 1994; Adams et al., 2006; Adams, 2012). In line with such constraints, this thesis shows that interest groups are more likely to influence ideologically similar parties. Parties generally do not listen to groups with explicitly dissimilar ideologies. When they do, however, the input seems to fit with their ideological profile. On a policy proposal concerning the right to fish in a river that flows through Norway and Finland, for example, the Norwegian Green Party copies input from the Norwegian Association of Hunters and Anglers that reflects the importance of the two countries reaching an agreement that ensures the long-term sustainable management of the river (see paper V). This focus on sustainability fits with the Green Party's position on environmental protection. In other words, ideological proximity – in the sense that a group and party share similar ideological goals or that the interest group input itself fits in with the party's ideology – seems to be an important requirement.

Interest groups, akin to other external actors, are hence unlikely in a shorter-term perspective to convince parties to take positions that radically differ from their previous positions and ideological profiles. They can, however, affect what positions parties take within the room they have for maneuver. Within that room, they can also influence the arguments parties bring up. This rhymes with what one of Allern's (2010, 251) party informants says in her case study of Norwegian parties' ties to interest groups: "Sometimes we even adopt entire proposals of new policy formulations, as long as they are not in conflict with our fundamental ideological view."

That ideological proximity is important furthermore straightens out what might at first glance seem like a puzzling finding in paper V, namely that parties are more likely to listen to interest groups on issues they emphasize more than their competitors. Listening to interest groups on these issues can, however, be a way for parties to keep their ears to the ground and cater to important constituents who are especially likely to pay attention. This can help parties keep their competitive advantage on these issues. In a second step, it is nevertheless again likely important for parties to ensure that the interest group input they listen to is consistent with their broader ideological profiles.

The thesis also finds that interest groups are more likely to influence parties that are more willing to compromise on policy. This is not to say that anything goes in terms of input in these cases either. The input likely still needs to be ideologically consistent (or able to be framed as such) to a certain extent but the room that these parties have for maneuver may be greater. Interest group input from a broader set of groups can therefore be of interest to more compromise-willing parties compared to those that are less willing to compromise.

While party-interest group interactions can be mutually beneficial, they are not necessarily normatively positive. Interest groups' political influence more generally may lead to inefficient public policy outcomes – ones that are more beneficial to specific constituents than to the public at large (see e.g., Mitchell & Munger, 1991; Lohmann, 1998). If we only consider parties and their positions, however, and assume that the goal is to have parties that take positions that are congruent with their voters, for voters to be able to vote for a party that represents their interests, and for parties to take more informed positions

on issues, then there are both positive and negative aspects to regular party-interest group interactions and interest group influence on parties.

A main negative aspect derives from biases in interest group populations. Early interest group studies were optimistic with regards to the mobilization of interests (e.g., Truman, 1951). This pluralist, group-theory tradition expects people to mobilize to protect their interests if they are threatened. Competition between affected interest groups will generate solutions that eventually lead to optimal policy outcomes, and groups are thus central to a well-functioning democracy. This tradition was challenged by Schattschneider (1960). Focusing specifically on organized interests (as opposed to Truman (1951) and others who also theorize about unorganized interests), Schattschneider (1960) shows that participation is biased. Olson's (1965) focus on the problem of collective action further challenges the pluralist approach. To mobilize, selective incentives are needed and individuals will only form or join interest groups if it means they can gain something they would otherwise miss out on. Not all interests have the same likelihood of mobilizing; certain types of interests are more likely to be represented than others.

While the more recent neopluralist approach argues and shows that there are ways to overcome the problem of collective action (Lowery & Gray, 2004), some interests are not represented either directly or indirectly by organized actors. Empirical studies of contemporary interest group populations furthermore show that business groups tend to be better represented in numerical terms (Wonka et al., 2010; Schlozman et al., 2012). These biases can bleed into interest group representation in political processes (Rasmussen & Carroll, 2014; Røed & Hansen, 2018). In addition, although the median citizen may be relatively well represented by interest groups most of the time (Flöthe & Rasmussen, 2019), the concerns of certain groups of citizens (e.g., people with higher education or income) can still be better represented than others by interest groups (Boräng & Naurin, 2021). In sum, these types of biases can make it harder for parties to obtain information about the preferences of unorganized and underrepresented constituents which again can decrease the likelihood that they are represented by parties.

Interest groups can on the other hand provide parties with expertise and in this way help parties take more informed issue positions. Providing inaccurate information to decision makers can harm interest groups' reputations and deter decision makers from trusting them in the future. Groups therefore have incentives to provide accurate information (Bernhagen, 2013). This implies that interest group information can help parties take positions that are more informed about possible real-world effects.

Interest groups can furthermore affect the congruence between parties and their voters. Interest groups translate their constituents' preferences into actual, actionable solutions, and they affect decision makers' perceptions of what the electorate wants (Eichenberger et al., 2021). In the words of Hansen (1991, 228-229),

> Interest groups do reproduce the demands of constituents. The demands they reproduce, however, are different from the demands that exist in their absence.

> Put another way, representatives listen closely to constituents' opinions, but the opinions they hear are reengineered in the presence of interest groups. (...) [I]nterest groups turn complaints into demands with appropriate policy responses. Typically, public opinion is inchoate, conveying more a reproof of the present than a blueprint for the future. Interest groups bring demands into focus. They formulate complaints into problems, and they develop (or adopt) policy options to solve them. In short, they frame issues. They insure that legislators receive articulate demands rather than inarticulate grievances.

Studies on individual legislators indicate how interest groups can affect congruence in more detail. Swiss legislators with ties to interest groups that represent *specific sections* of society are for example found to be less likely to vote in line with what the majority in their electoral districts wants. Having ties to groups that advocate for *general beliefs or principles*, however, increases the likelihood of voting in line with what this majority wants (Giger & Klüver, 2016). Depending on the connected groups' nature, they can in other words decrease or increase congruence.

This can affect how satisfied people are with democracy. When parties take more extreme positions than the median voter, people are generally more dissatisfied (Ezrow & Xezonakis, 2011). Interest groups' involvement can in this way be negative (positive) if it induces parties to take positions that are less (more) in line with what the median voter prefers. This thesis shows that diffuse groups – citizen and public interest groups – are more likely to influence parties than special interest groups. In light of Giger & Klüver's (2016) findings, this implies that interest groups' influence on parties may generally positively affect the congruence between parties and the median voter.

It can, however, also be desirable to have parties that represent minority interests as well and not just the interests of the median voter. Voters can be left "miserable" if parties do not cater to their constituents but instead try to attract new voters (Laver, 2011). Individuals who are able to vote for a party they are ideologically close to are generally more satisfied with democracy (Brandenburg & Johns, 2014; van Egmond et al., 2020). Having parties that represent minority interests can therefore be positive. In this regard, De Bruycker & Rasmussen (2021) show that the mobilization of business groups (civil society groups) is associated with higher congruence between right-wing (left-wing) politicians and their constituents. As mentioned, this thesis finds that interest groups are more likely to influence ideologically proximate parties which can be positive to the extent that it increases the congruence between parties and their voters.

In the remainder of this introduction to the thesis, I first present the general theoretical assumptions the thesis makes and outline where the study of organizational ties and interest group influence on parties fits in vis-à-vis policy processes at large. Second, I present and discuss previous research in the three main literatures the thesis speaks to, namely 1) research on interest group influence, 2) research on party positions, and 3) research on party-interest group ties. I then discuss important definitions and measures before I summarize the thesis'

five papers and point out some avenues for future research.

2 Theoretical assumptions and policy processes

The papers that make up this thesis build on some similar assumptions concerning the goals of parties and interest groups. Beyond the most fundamental goal of surviving (Wilson, 1995; Lowery, 2007), interest groups seek policy influence while parties seek to maximize votes, office benefits, and policy (Beyers et al., 2008; Strøm, 1990). Parties, unlike interest groups, compete in elections (Sartori, 1976), and successful parties can hence offer interest groups a voice in the political arena that could affect public policy outcomes further down the road. Interest groups therefore have an incentive to interact with and try to influence parties.

Individual interest groups deal with a narrower range of policy areas than parties, and one of the resources they have to offer on their side is expertise and political information on how policy alternatives will fare among their constituents (Chalmers, 2013). Interest groups are not necessarily perfect transmission belts between their constituents and political decision makers (see e.g., Salisbury, 1984). How involved members are in decision-making processes within membership groups, for example, varies (Warleigh, 2001; Binderkrantz, 2009; Albareda, 2018; cf. Halpin 2006). Given their narrower policy focus, interest groups in general may nevertheless have a greater inclination of how different positions will be received among their constituents than parties. Certain types of interest groups furthermore tend to be fairly well aligned with the median citizen (Flöthe & Rasmussen, 2019). Interest group information can therefore help parties bolster their positions and appeal to the groups' constituents. In addition to information, interest groups can offer donations as well as endorsements which can further help parties maximize their votes (Warner, 2000). Overall, this means that both actors can benefit from interacting.

To situate the thesis in the broader processes that interest groups and parties are part of, I start by considering the "influence production process" for interest groups (Lowery & Gray, 2004; Lowery et al., 2008). The first two stages in the influence production process concern the beginnings, survival, and dissolutions of individual interest groups as well as interest group populations and their density and diversity, which this thesis is not concerned with. It is, however, concerned with the third stage which regards the strategies interest groups use to exercise influence. The literature on interest group strategies distinguishes between inside (direct) strategies and outside (indirect) strategies. With an inside strategy, interest groups make their case to political decision makers directly. With an outside strategy, interest groups try to wield political influence indirectly by mobilizing citizens or affecting public opinion (e.g., via media appearances, demonstrations, or campaigns) (Schlozman & Tierney, 1986; Binderkrantz, 2005; Dür & Mateo, 2016). This thesis examines the inside strategy of interest groups' interactions with political parties. Interest groups can lobby parties on an issue-by-issue basis but they can also build longer-term relation-

ships with parties and maintain organizational ties that go beyond lobbying (Allern, Otjes, et al., 2020). The latter is the focus in this thesis.

The thesis is furthermore indirectly concerned with the last stage in the influence production process: interest groups' influence on public policy outcomes. Given the crucial role of parties when it comes to legislating and governing as well as parties' impact on policy outcomes (Dalton et al., 2011; Saalfeld & Strøm, 2014; Potrafke, 2017; Thomson et al., 2017), interest groups' influence on parties can be an indirect way to influence such outcomes. The thesis in other words sheds light on an intermediate stage that precedes interest group influence on public policy outcomes.

In terms of public policy processes, consisting of agenda setting, formulation, decision, and implementation, interest groups are relevant actors at each of these stages. This thesis narrows in on the formulation stage and more specifically the solutions parties formulate at this stage. While the party literature concerns both parties' *emphasis* on issues as well as their issue *positions* (Green-Pedersen, 2007; Adams, 2012), this thesis mainly addresses the latter and asks when and why interest groups affect parties' positions and the substantive arguments and ideas they bring up at the formulation stage in the policy process (see Otjes & Green-Pedersen (2019) and Klüver (2020) for interest group influence on parties' attention to issues).

3 Literature reviews

3.1 Research on interest group influence

The main bulk of studies on interest group influence in the 1980s and 1990s focused on whether interest group lobbying affects how (American) legislators vote. The results were mixed. Lobbying was seemingly sometimes important and sometimes not (Smith, 1995). The new question then became when interest group influence is more and less likely. To answer this, newer studies examine the impact of interest group as well as issue characteristics. These studies mainly concern interest group influence on legislators, governments, courts, the bureaucracy, and policy outcomes (Hojnacki et al., 2012). While some focus on interest group influence at the national level in (Western European) countries, the empirical context in most of the studies is the EU or the US. Table 1 gives an overview of the main explanations and findings in this literature.

Starting with interest group characteristics, more resourceful interest groups are first of all expected to be more successful. Several studies examine the effect of interest group resources indirectly and use interest group type as a proxy, assuming that e.g. special interest groups such as business groups are more resourceful than diffuse interest groups such as citizen groups. The results are mixed. Some find that business groups are more likely to wield influence than (certain) other groups, both in the EU (Bunea, 2013; Stevens & De Bruycker, 2020) and the US (Yackee & Yackee, 2006; Mahoney, 2007). A few studies in contrast find that diffuse interest groups are more successful in the EU (Dür et al., 2015)

Table 1: Explanations for interest group influence

	Explanation	Findings
Interest group characteristics	Resources	Interest group type: – Business groups more successful (Yackee & Yackee, 2006; Mahoney, 2007; Bunea, 2013; Stevens & De Bruycker, 2020) – Diffuse groups more successful (Dür et al., 2015; Rasmussen et al., 2018) – Non-significant (Mahoney, 2007; Klüver, 2011; Judge & Thomson, 2018; Junk, 2020) Financial resources: – Positive (Stevens & De Bruycker, 2020) – Non-significant (Mahoney, 2007; Baumgartner et al., 2009; Klüver, 2011; McKay, 2012)
	Donations	– Mixed (see Smith, 1995)
	Interest group preferences	Advocating for the status quo: – Positive (Mahoney, 2007; Bunea, 2013; Rasmussen et al., 2018) – Non-significant (Junk, 2020) Interest group preferences reflect median position: – Positive (Bunea, 2013) Advocating for stricter regulations: – Positive (Chalmers, 2020)
	Member of interest group coalition	(Relative) number of groups on same side: – Positive (Klüver, 2011; Rasmussen et al., 2018; Junk & Rasmussen, 2019) Cooperation on specific issue: – Positive (Nelson & Yackee, 2012; Junk, 2020)
Issue characteristics	Salience	Stakeholder salience: – Non-significant (Klüver, 2011; Bunea, 2013) Public salience: – Negative (Mahoney, 2007; Culpepper, 2011) – Positive (Rasmussen et al., 2018) – Non-significant (Dür et al., 2015; Stevens & De Bruycker, 2020)
	Aligned public opinion	– Positive (Dür & Mateo, 2014; Rasmussen et al., 2018) – Non-significant (Junk, 2020)
	Conflict	– Negative (Mahoney, 2007; Dür et al., 2015; Chalmers, 2020; Truijens & Hanegraaff, 2020) – Non-significant (Klüver, 2011; Bunea, 2013)
	Complexity	– Non-significant (Klüver, 2011)
	Scope	– Negative (Mahoney, 2007)

and at the national level in Europe (Rasmussen et al., 2018). Yet others find no significant differences (Mahoney, 2007; Klüver, 2011; Judge & Thomson, 2019; Junk, 2020). This thesis finds that diffuse interest groups are more likely to influence parties than special interest groups, potentially because parties have electoral incentives to seek the type of information

that diffuse interest groups supply.

Some use more direct measures of interest groups' resources (e.g., number of employees, budgets). The results here are more consistently non-significant in both the EU and the US (Mahoney, 2007; Baumgartner et al., 2009; Klüver, 2011; McKay, 2012). Stevens & De Bruycker (2020), however, find a positive correlation between the number of people interest groups employ and influence on EU policy issues. This thesis similarly finds a positive correlation between employees and influence on parties, supporting the hypothesis that more resourceful actors are more influential.

A second interest group aspect that the US literature in particular focuses on is donations (campaign contributions). A common assumption is that "campaign contributions profoundly influence the legislative decisions of members of Congress" (Smith, 1995, 91), but the empirical results are mixed. In light of this, some hypothesize that donations matter under certain conditions. Witko (2006), for example, finds that political action committees are more likely to influence roll-call voting in the US Congress on less salient issues. Others argue that interest group donations "buy" *access* instead of direct influence (see Langbein, 1986; Ansolabehere et al., 2003; Kalla & Broockman, 2016).

This thesis finds a positive correlation between interest group donations to specific parties and 1) groups' organizational ties to those parties, and 2) interest group influence on those parties. The latter correlation, however, loses it statistical significance when we add organizational ties to the model. This implies that donations mainly affect influence via the ties interest groups and parties maintain, and thus lends some support to the idea that donations "buy" access and indirectly affect influence.

Some examine the effect of interest groups' preferences on influence, and particularly whether groups that advocate for the status quo are more successful than those who seek policy change. This receives support in both Europe and the US (Mahoney, 2007, Bunea, 2013, Rasmussen et al., 2018; but see Junk, 2020, who finds no significant differences). Some examine other types of preferences. Bunea (2013) finds that interest groups with preferences that reflect the median position (compared to other interest groups) are more likely to influence the European Commission's (EC) policy proposals, while Chalmers (2020) shows that financial interest groups that want stricter regulations compared to what the EC proposes in the financial policy area are more likely to be successful than those that want more lenient regulations.

Several studies argue and find that interest groups that are part of coalitions are more influential. Some studies examine the relative number of groups that are on the same side on a given policy proposal, and find a positive correlation between being on the relatively larger side and having influence (Klüver, 2011; Rasmussen et al., 2018; Junk & Rasmussen, 2019). Others investigate the effect of *active* cooperation between interest groups, e.g. whether interest groups encourage others to participate (Nelson & Yackee, 2012) or whether interest groups exchange information with others, coordinate their strategies, and are part of formal coalitions (Junk, 2020). These studies find that interest groups that are part of these types of coalitions are more likely to be influential. Using a detailed interest group coalition

measure, this thesis finds that this also seems to be an important explanation for interest group influence on parties. Junk (2019) moreover examines the composition of coalitions and finds that when issues are more salient to stakeholders, diverse coalitions are more influential. Most of the coalitions examined in this thesis are homogeneous, meaning that the relationship between coalition membership and influence is unlikely to be driven by coalition diversity.

Moving on to issue characteristics, issue salience is first of all expected to affect interest group influence negatively. Some examine the relationship between issues' salience to stakeholders and influence and find that this is non-significant (Klüver, 2011; Bunea, 2013). Most conceptualize salience as issues' salience to the public at large. The empirical results here are mixed. While some find a negative relationship between salience and influence in the EU and several national contexts (Mahoney, 2007; Culpepper, 2011), others find that interest groups are more successful when issues are more salient (Rasmussen et al., 2018). Two EU studies moreover report non-significant results (Dür et al., 2015; Stevens & De Bruycker, 2020). I find a negative correlation between public salience and parties' propensity to listen to interest groups which I argue is a result of parties' electoral incentives.

Whether interest groups have public opinion on their side is also expected to affect influence. Rasmussen et al. (2018) find that interest groups in five European countries are more likely to attain their preferred outcomes when the interest groups and the majority of the public have similar preferences. They in particular find that diffuse interest groups are more successful in this case (see also Dür & Mateo, 2014). Being congruent with the public is less important for special interest groups. Junk (2020), however, finds that public opinion alignment does not matter for interest groups' perceived influence on policy issues in the same countries.

Some hypothesize that issue conflict matters: Interest groups are more likely to be influential when their views and interests regarding a specific issue generally agree. The empirical results are again mixed. Some find support for the hypothesis (Mahoney, 2007; Dür et al., 2015; Chalmers, 2020), while others report non-significant results (Klüver, 2011; Bunea, 2013). Truijens & Hanegraaff (2020) distinguish between external conflict – when there is conflict between different types of groups (e.g., citizen groups and business groups) – and internal conflict – when there is conflict among groups of the same type (e.g., disagreement among business groups). In a case study of four EU policies, they find that internal conflict is more damaging to interest group influence than external conflict.

Klüver (2011) and Mahoney (2007) examine the impact of two additional issue characteristics. Klüver (2011) finds a non-significant relationship between issue *complexity* and lobbying success, while Mahoney (2007) shows that interest groups are less likely to be successful when the *scope* of the issue is larger.

To summarize, newer studies on interest group influence mainly hypothesize that interest group and issue characteristics affect interest groups' ability to wield political influence at the national level in Europe, in the EU, and in the US. The results are generally mixed. Some find support for the hypothesized relationships, some do not, and some find the op-

posite of the hypothesized relationships. These discrepancies might partly be a result of differences between the actors that interest groups try to influence. While the literature recognizes that different actors can have different incentives to listen to (specific) interest groups (see e.g. Dür et al. (2015) and Judge & Thomson (2019) who differentiate between the incentives of the EC and the European Parliament (EP)), it nevertheless tends to treat each type of actor as having homogeneous incentives and preferences (but see Bernhagen et al., 2015). Studies for example (implicitly) assume that the directorates-general (DGs) that make up the EC approach interest groups in a similar way. One of the contributions of this thesis is to show that differences between actors of the same type (in this case, political parties) can matter for interest groups' influence.

The goals, incentives, and constraints that e.g. different DGs or government ministries face are not necessarily uniform, and interest groups' influence on a given policy proposal may consequently partly depend on the DG or government ministry that is responsible for the proposal. In the case of the EC, the resources DGs have at their disposal vary and different DGs may primarily seek different types of information (Coen & Katsaitis, 2013). In this vein, Haverland et al. (2018) find that "business-oriented" DGs are less likely than "NGO-oriented" DGs to conduct special Eurobarometers which provide insight into public opinion on a given issue. Such differences could affect interest groups' ability to influence the EC's policy proposals. Who the commissioner and the director-general of a DG are can also matter. There are for instance "stark differences in the ideological backgrounds of the DGs' political leadership. (...) Social democrats have indeed often headed some of the more interventionist DGs, such as DGs EMPL [employment], REGIO [regional], and TREN [transport and energy]. Likewise, members of conservative or liberal parties are found more often at the helm of the economic portfolios DGs MARKT [internal market], BUDG [budget], and even COMP [competition] (but also RELEX [external relations]) than their social-democratic colleagues" (Hartlapp et al., 2014, 50-51). Considering such differences in future studies on interest group influence is relevant to understand better when interest groups are influential.

3.2 Research on party positions

The literature on party positions above all concerns why parties change their left-right positions. The explanations for such changes focus on party competition in addition to external conditions and events (Adams, 2012; Fagerholm, 2016). A few studies furthermore consider the impact of internal party factions and subnational parties on party positions as expressed in manifestos (Ceron, 2012; Bäck et al., 2016). Table 2 summarizes the main explanations and findings in this literature.

The literature on party position changes typically assumes that parties primarily seek votes: "Parties formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies" (Downs, 1957, 28). In two-party systems and depending on several assumptions, this will lead parties to converge on the median voter's position (Downs,

Table 2: Explanations for party positions and position changes. Is there a relationship?

	Explanation	Findings
Party positions	Internal party organization	Party factions: – Yes (Ceron, 2012) Subnational parties: – Yes (Bäck et al., 2016)
Party position changes	Party competition	Responsiveness to median voter: – Yes (Adams et al., 2004) – Non-significant (O'Grady & Abou-Chadi, 2019; Ibenskas & Polk, 2021) Depends on: – Party goals (Adams et al., 2006; Ezrow et al., 2010; Bischof & Wagner, 2020) – Nicheness (Bischof & Wagner, 2020; Ferland, 2020) – Electoral volatility (Dassonneville, 2018) Responsiveness to own voters: – Yes, to minimize distance if larger gap (Ibenskas & Polk, 2021; see also Ferland, 2020) Depends on: – Leadership election process (Lehrer, 2012) – Role of party activists (Schumacher et al., 2013; but see Bischof & Wagner, 2020) – Party performance (responsiveness to members/activists) (Kaltenegger et al., 2021) Election results: – Yes (Somer-Topcu, 2009) – Non-significant (Adams et al., 2004) Other parties: – Yes, competitors' position changes (Adams & Somer-Topcu, 2009) – Yes, radical right parties' electoral success (van Spanje, 2010; Abou-Chadi, 2014, Han, 2015; Abou-Chadi & Krause, 2020) – Yes, party system issue salience (Abou-Chadi et al., 2020) – Yes, foreign parties (Böhmelt et al., 2016; Düpont & Rachuj, 2021)
	External conditions and events	Global economy: – Yes (center- and right-wing parties) (Adams et al., 2009) House price levels: – Yes (right-wing parties) (Beckmann, 2020) EU intervention following crisis: – Yes (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020)

1957). When the assumptions are not met and in multiparty systems, however, party positions generally do not converge on the median voter's position (Laver, 1997; Grofman, 2004). Assuming that voters vote for the party that is closest to them ideologically, vote-seeking parties nevertheless have an incentive to change their positions when voters change their positions (see also Stimson et al., 1995; Wlezien, 1995). Previous studies thus examine whether changes in the median voter's position affect party position changes. Adams et al.

(2004) find that this is the case. Parties differ in their responsiveness to the median voter, however. More policy-seeking parties and niche parties are less likely to respond (Adams et al., 2006; Ezrow et al., 2010; Bischof & Wagner, 2020; Ferland, 2020), as are parties in systems with less volatile voters (Dassonneville, 2018).

There is not unequivocal support for the median voter hypothesis (see O'Grady & Abou-Chadi, 2019; Ibenskas & Polk, 2021), and an alternative hypothesis is that parties rather respond to their own voters. Ibenskas & Polk (2021) in this regard find that larger distances between mainstream parties and their voters lead the parties to change their positions to close the gap. Similarly, Ferland (2020) finds that mainstream parties generally follow their own voters when these voters move away from the parties' positions.

Whether parties respond to the median voter or their own voters may depend on party activists' role. While the party organization literature predicts that the role of activists and members – actors who may have more extreme preferences than the party leadership (May, 1973, but see Kitschelt, 1994, Norris, 1995) – will decline (Kirchheimer, 1966; Katz & Mair, 1995), this is not uniformly borne out empirically (Poguntke et al., 2016). Party activists can in other words still be important actors within parties. Studies show that parties are more likely to respond to their own voters' positions when party leaders are chosen by party members at large (Lehrer, 2012), and when party activists have more of a say in party policy decisions (Schumacher et al., 2013; but see Bischof & Wagner, 2020). Whether parties achieve their goals can also affect whether they respond to their members and activists (Kaltenegger et al., 2021).

Some furthermore study parties' responsiveness to voters in a more indirect way, namely by considering the impact of parties' previous election results on position changes. Losing votes in an election can imply that a party's positions are less appealing to voters, inducing the party to change (Budge, 1994). Adams et al. (2004) do not find support for this, while Somer-Topcu (2009) does and specifies that the amount of time that elapses between elections is important.

Previous research moreover examines the impact of other parties – their positions, election results, and attention to issues – on position changes. First, parties are more likely to change their positions when their competitors have changed their positions (Adams & Somer-Topcu, 2009). Second, mainstream parties respond to the electoral success of radical right parties (van Spanje, 2010; Abou-Chadi, 2014; Han, 2015; Abou-Chadi & Krause, 2020). Third, Abou-Chadi et al. (2020) find that the salience of issues among their competitors affects larger parties' positions. Lastly, parties draw on information from foreign parties when deciding on positions (Böhmelt et al., 2016; Düpont & Rachuj, 2021).

A second strand of research examines the impact of external conditions and events on position changes. For instance, center- and right-wing parties respond to changes in the global economy (Adams et al., 2009); right-wing parties respond to house price levels as homeowners are an important constituency for these parties (Beckmann, 2020; see also Davidsson, 2018); and parties in countries subject to economic intervention by the EU following the financial crisis are more likely to take more Eurosceptic positions (Turnbull-

Dugarte, 2020).

While the main focus in the party position literature is on the impact of voters, party actors, other parties, and external conditions and events, a few studies consider interest group influence. Karol (2009) studies the American Democratic Party's and Republican Party's position changes on six issues and focuses on the impact of interactions between parties and groups. Groups that are part of the party "coalition" and groups that the party wants to attract affect position changes. In the case of trade policy, for example, Karol (2009) argues that the Democratic Party shifted its position to retain the support of trade unions, whereas the Republican Party shifted its position to retain the support of business groups. This thesis finds a positive relationship between organizational ties and interest group influence on parties, and hence lends more general support to Karol's (2009) qualitative analysis.

Two studies furthermore examine the effect of interest group resources. Studying the American Christian Coalition's influence on the Republican Party at the county and state level, Clifton (2004) finds that the Coalition's ability to mobilize voters and provide information and expertise are important for influence. Financial donations are on the other hand non-significant. Victor & Reinhardt (2018) offer two findings that stand in contrast to this. Examining interest groups' influence on the Democratic Party's platform in 1996, 2000, and 2004, they show that interest groups are more likely to influence the platform when they mainly donate to the Democratic Party, but they are not more likely to do so when they are better able to mobilize voters (operationalized using membership numbers and budgets). Victor & Reinhardt (2018) moreover find that ideologically proximate groups (operationalized using campaign contributions) are more influential. This thesis first of all finds, as noted above, a positive correlation between donations to parties and influence – similar to Victor & Reinhardt (2018) – and that this effect is likely mediated via the organizational ties parties and interest groups maintain. Second, and akin to Victor & Reinhardt (2018) but using a more direct measure, the thesis shows that ideological proximity is important for interest group influence on parties.

While these studies offer valuable insight into the impact of interest groups on party positions, they are limited to the US context and thus to two relatively weak parties. One of the contributions of this thesis is to show that interest groups also affect the (content of the) positions parties take in Western Europe where parties are stronger. Examining Western European parties also makes it possible to study a more diverse set of parties and hence investigate the effect of party characteristics on interest groups' ability to influence parties. As the above literature review shows, party characteristics affect responsiveness. Building on this, the thesis finds that how parties prioritze their goals and whether parties are in government affect interest group influence on parties. At the issue level, parties' issue emphasis also matters.

Interest groups may be able to influence parties because they supply expertise as well as political information on e.g. voters' preferences. While previous studies indicate that parties use local politicians, social media, and protests as sources of information (Butler et al., 2017; Hutter & Vliegenthart, 2018; Ennser-Jedenastik et al., 2021), few highlight inter-

est groups' role. The findings of this thesis imply that interest groups can be a pertinent source of information for parties. Interest groups can in this way function as intermediaries between certain voters and parties and positively affect parties' responsiveness to these voters.

3.3 Research on party-interest group ties

Certain parties and interest groups, such as social democratic parties and trade unions, have historically been closely connected (Allern & Bale, 2012). The party literature predicts that such party-interest group ties will wither as parties face new realities (Kirchheimer, 1966; Katz & Mair, 1995). Others, however, argue that while the value of party-interest group ties may depreciate to some extent, they are likely still of value to both parties and interest groups (Allern & Bale, 2012). Contemporary research shows that parties and interest groups continue to interact on a regular basis and the ties between the actors are not necessarily or uniformly weaker than previously (Allern et al., 2007; Allern, 2010; Quinn, 2010; Rasmussen & Lindeboom, 2013; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017; Allern & Bale, 2017). The main trade union confederations and social democratic parties in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, for example, no longer have collective membership or mutual representation in central leadership bodies but they nevertheless still have other relatively strong organizational ties, such as joint committees that bring the party and confederation leaderships together (Allern et al., 2007).

These previous studies examine either a circumscribed set of parties and interest groups in several countries or a more diverse set of actors in a limited number of countries. Using detailed survey data on organizational ties between a range of different parties and interest groups in many established democracies, this thesis finds that the patterns previous studies hint at hold more generally. Party-interest group ties, and especially less formal ties, are common today. The thesis thus provides pertinent descriptive results to the literature.

To explain variation in party-interest group ties, previous studies mainly focus on resources and ideological proximity, in addition to certain other party and party system characteristics. The first expectation, based on an exchange model, is that the groups and parties that can supply more resources to each other will have stronger ties. Interest groups can for example contribute to parties financially, while larger parties or governing parties may provide the political influence interest groups seek. Previous studies generally find support for the resource-exchange hypothesis (Allern et al., 2007; Quinn, 2010; F. J. Christiansen, 2012; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017). Otjes & Rasmussen (2017), for example, find that interest groups are more likely to collaborate with larger parties, and Quinn (2010) argues that the desire for continued trade union donations induced the British Labour Party to "re-link" with the unions.

This thesis shows that trade unions and parties that traditionally have been closely connected are more likely to maintain stronger organizational ties today when the trade unions donate money to the parties. This echoes the case study findings of Allern et al. (2007) and

Quinn (2010) and lends more systematic support to this idea. The thesis furthermore finds a positive correlation between organizational ties and interest group influence on parties. Interest groups thus seemingly get part of what they seek out of these regular interactions. A further contribution of this thesis is to highlight that ties can affect whether parties and interest groups *mutually* influence each other. While some case studies point out that closely connected interest groups and parties do so (e.g., Allern, 2010; Grødem & Hippe, 2019), this thesis provides more systematic evidence for the positive relationship between ties and mutual influence.

A second hypothesis in this literature is that parties and interest groups are more likely to regularly interact if they have similar ideological preferences. Assuming that trade unions, environmental groups, and humanitarian organizations are aligned with left-wing parties and that business groups are aligned with right-wing parties, Otjes & Rasmussen (2017) find support for this expectation. Relatedly, Rasmussen & Lindeboom (2013) find that interest groups with a partisan foundation have more institutionalized ties to parties. This thesis shows that ideological proximity seemingly is important for regular party-interest group leadership contact.

Some studies furthermore examine whether certain parties are less likely to regularly interact with interest groups. Allern (2013) investigates the ties between interest groups and the "new" left and right parties in Norway (the Socialist Left Party and Progress Party). Both parties, contrary to expectations, have ties to several kinds of interest groups. Berkhout et al. (2021) look at whether interest groups have less frequent contact with populist parties as these parties contend to represent "the people" and focus on direct representation. Examining interest groups and parties in five European countries, they find support for this.

Lastly, Allern et al. (2021), using party survey data, show that party system characteristics affect organizational ties. The top leaderships in parties and interest groups meet more regularly in more fragmented as well as in less polarized party systems. In a similar vein, this thesis points out that institutional factors can affect organizational ties. In line with the predictions of Katz & Mair (1995), we find that the amount of public subsidies parties receive conditions the effect of donations on ties, and that state regulations of private donations to parties negatively affect ties. These findings show that the institutional framework interest groups and parties operate in can create more or less favorable environments for exchanges between the two actors.

4 Definitions and measures

4.1 Political parties and interest groups

A political party is "any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office" (Sartori, 1976, 64). An interest group is a formal organization that seeks political influence but does not compete in elections (Beyers et al., 2008). While Bawn et al. (2012, 571) argue that US parties are "coalitions of interest

groups and activists seeking to capture and use government for their particular goals (...)", this thesis considers parties and interest groups to be distinct organizations.

These basic definitions apply across the papers in this thesis but there are some slight variations when it comes to the actors that are studied. With regards to parties, paper I includes parties with historically close ties to trade unions, i.e., mainly social democratic and socialist parties, in 12 established democracies. Paper II, III, and IV use interest group survey data from up to seven established democracies where respondents were asked about their ties to and influence on all parties with at least one legislative seat when the survey was carried out (party N = 54). Paper II furthermore uses party survey data from 19 countries. Parties with at least one legislative seat and more than one percent of the votes in one of the last three elections, or at least two percent of the votes in the last election were invited to participate in this survey. 104 out of 155 parties (67%) responded (Allern, Hansen, et al., 2020). Lastly, paper V includes all parties with at least one legislative seat in Norway. The common denominator across papers is that they cover parties with a certain level of popular support. These parties generally vary with regards to size, government status, nicheness, and ideology, among other things. Overall, the thesis' findings hence apply to a variety of successful parties.

Table 3: Interest groups across papers

Paper I	Paper II-IV	Paper V
Trade union confederations	Interest group survey	Private and non-private,
Major individual trade unions	Membership and non-membership private groups	membership and non-
		membership groups
AU: ACTU, ANMF	857 respondents	
AT: PRO-GE, GPA-djp		1,707 unique interest
FI: SAK, STTK, Akava	Party survey (paper II only)	groups
FR: FSU, CGT, CFDT, UNSA, FO, CFTC	Group types	
DE: DGB, IG BCE, GEW, IG Metall, Ver.di		
IL: Histadrut, HL, KL	- Agriculture/farm/fisheries/forestry	
IT: CGIL, CISL, UIL	- Employers'/business/industry/manufacturing	
NL: FNV, CNV, MHP	- Companies	
SE: LO, TCO, Saco, SAC	- Labor/trade unions	
CH: KV, SGB, Travail.Suisse	- Occupational/professional	
GB: TUC, GMB, Unite	- Environmental/nature conservation/climate/	
US: AFL-CIO, CTW, SEIU, AFT, UAW, UBC	animal welfare/wildlife	
	- Humanitarian/development/foreign aid	
	- Pro-immigration	
	- Anti-immigration	
	- Religious	
	- Interfaith/non-religious spiritual	

Table 3 outlines the types of interest groups that this thesis examines. Paper I includes trade union confederations and major individual trade unions (listed in Table 3), while the other papers cover a broader range of groups including membership and non-membership organizations. Respondents to the party survey used in paper II were for practical reasons asked about their interactions with different group *types*. Paper V moreover stands out in that it employs more of a "behavioral" definition of interest groups where the main criterion – apart from groups being formal organizations that seek influence and do not compete

in elections – is that they engage in policy-related activities (in this case, participate in a government consultation) (Baroni et al., 2014). This paper thus investigates a wider range of interest groups compared to the other papers, including for example governmental actors. While several other studies also include governmental actors when studying interest group influence (e.g., Mahoney, 2007; Bunea, 2013; see also Schlozman et al., 2012), some define interest groups as private (non-governmental) organizations (e.g., Yoho, 1998). I therefore also examine whether the results in paper V hold if governmental actors are excluded and find that this largely is the case. In sum, the thesis' findings indicate that interest groups – in both a narrower and wider sense – influence parties.

4.2 Party-interest group relationships: organizational ties

The thesis defines party-interest group relationships as organizational ties between the two actors. Such ties "connect decision-making bodies, headquarters and/or the decision-makers or staff" of a party and interest group and are "means by which a party and an interest group may interact repeatedly" (Allern, Otjes, et al., 2020, 4). Relationships in other words do not refer to e.g. resource transfers or the "ideological affinity" between groups and parties (Allern & Bale, 2012). Organizational ties furthermore differ from lobbying. Lobbying concerns interest groups' contact with decision makers on specific issues, whereas ties are more regularized and structured and not "purely related to a specific issue" (Allern, Otjes, et al., 2020, 4).

The thesis covers a wide range of organizational ties between parties and interest groups. Both durable, joint arrangements and agreements as well as event-based, organized routines between parties and interest groups are included. Table 4 lists the specific ties.[1]

Table 4: Organizational ties

Joint arrangements and agreements	Organized routines	
	Invitations to group to participate in	Invitations to party to participate in
1) Tacit agreements about one-sided or mutual representation in national decision-making bodies 2) Permanent joint committee(s) 3) Temporary joint committee(s) 4) Written agreements about regular party-group meetings 5) Tacit agreements about regular party-group meetings 6) Joint conferences 7) Joint campaigns	1) Ordinary party meetings 2) Special consultative meetings initiated by party 3) National party congress/conference	1) Internal group meetings 2) Special consultative meetings initiated by group 3) National group congress/conference

[1]Since paper I focuses on parties' incentives to maintain ties to interest groups specifically, we only include the organized routines a party initiates. We moreover only include those that apply to both legislative party groups and central party organizations, i.e., invitations to group to participate in ordinary party meetings and special consultative meetings initiated by the party.

State-interest group relationships

Party-interest group organizational ties are distinct from corporatism, pluralism and statism – i.e., relationships between the *state* and interest groups. Corporatism, while a multi-faceted concept (Siaroff, 1999; P. M. Christiansen et al., 2010; Jahn, 2016), here refers to the incorporation of interest groups in governmental policy processes (Schmitter, 1974; Jahn, 2016). In corporatist countries, strong and formally organized relationships between the state and certain interest groups exist. Some interest groups are formally incorporated in governmental policy processes and participate in the preparation and implementation of public policies (P. M. Christiansen et al., 2010). In pluralist countries, on the other hand, state-interest group relations are weaker and informal. Non-institutionalized relationships are the norm (Schmitter, 1974), leading to "the predominance of 'pressure-group' politics and the lobbying of government agencies and parliament by fragmented and competing interest groups" (Lehmbruch, 1984, 65). Lastly, in statist countries interest groups and the state function more or less independently from each other; the state typically does not consult with interest groups when policies are formulated, although groups might be consulted before policies are implemented (Schmidt, 1996; Falkner, 2000).[2]

While state-interest group relationships and party-interest group relationships are distinct, one might influence the other. On the one hand, interest groups in corporatist countries can find close organizational ties to parties less useful. Rasmussen & Lindeboom (2013), for example, find that interest groups in the pluralist United Kingdom (UK) have stronger ties to parties than groups in two corporatist countries. On the other hand and under certain circumstances, interest groups in corporatist countries can find close organizational ties to parties more useful because they allow the groups to bypass bargaining with other interest groups (Anthonsen et al., 2011). For groups with representation in corporatist bodies, maintaining ties to parties can also be an additional strategy to gain influence (see Rommetvedt et al., 2012). Nevertheless, only a small number of interest groups are formally incorporated in governmental policy processes in corporatist countries, and the number of groups that have to seek influence by other means is large (Allern, 2010, 101). For the average interest group in corporatist systems, the incentives to maintain and establish ties to

[2] In paper III, I label France "pluralist" partly because trade unions and employers' organizations rarely are involved in government decisions regarding social or economic issues (Visser, 2019). An absence of this type of corporatist arrangement does not imply that the country is pluralist, however, and it would have been more appropriate to label France e.g. non-corporatist (see also Jahn, 2016, 61) or, even better, statist. More specifically, Schmidt (1996, 46) points out that

> In the political science literature, France has generally been treated as an anomaly, a country with revolts and revolutions rather than the peaceable representation of interests, and an authoritative imposition of policy rather than pluralist consultation of the kind found in the United States or corporatist concertation characteristic of the smaller European democracies and Germany. As a result, France has at best been characterized as having "limited pluralism" or "weak corporatistm."

Schmidt (1996) goes on to argue that describing France as statist is more appropriate.

parties may be similar to those in other systems.

4.3 Interest group influence

Building on Dahl's (1957) definition of power, influence is an interest group's ability to to get someone to do something that they would not have done had it not been for the interest group (see also Bernhagen et al., 2014). In the case of parties, interest groups may for example affect parties' agendas, leadership and candidate selection processes, as well as the substantive content of their policy positions. This thesis concerns interest groups' influence on the latter. While interest groups can prevent or block issues form entering the agenda at all (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962), the focus here is on issues that are on the agenda.

Measuring interest group influence is "one of the most fraught, difficult and complex problems in political science research" (Beyers et al., 2008, 1115; see also Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Dür, 2008; Bernhagen et al., 2014). It is first of all difficult to establish a counterfactual (Smith, 1995; Lowery, 2013): It is hard to know to what extent a given party's position and the substantive arguments the party presents would differ without a given interest group's input. A second problem is "anticipated reactions" (Lowery, 2013). Parties may for example anticipate what interest groups will support and object to and adjust their positions accordingly. Third, interest groups can use a range of inside and outside strategies but a given measure may only be able to take one specific strategy into account (Dür, 2008).

One solution to these problems is to circumvent them and study access instead. Having access does not, however, always equate to having influence. It is furthermore also possible to wield influence without having direct access to political actors. To get at interest group influence more directly, the most common approaches in previous research are process tracing, asking interest groups or other political actors about their own or others' influence, and assessing preference attainment (Dür, 2008).

With process tracing, a small number of issues are studied in depth using a variety of sources in order to determine whether and how interest groups have influenced e.g. a policy outcome. While there are some benefits to this approach in terms of internal validity, it potentially lacks external validity and it is difficult to establish a counterfactual (Smith, 1995; Dür, 2008). More generally, with small-N studies it can be hard to pay sufficient attention to the impact of context on influence (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Dür, 2008).

Asking interest groups or other political actors to rate their own or others' influence gets at perceived or attributed influence and is done by way of interviews or surveys (Dür, 2008). Paper III and IV use this approach. In a large-scale interest group survey, respondents were asked to rate their own influence (i.e., perceived influence) on specific parties in specific policy areas where the groups are most active. This makes it possible to examine the impact of e.g. a range of different interest group and party characteristics on influence. The respondents may moreover consider all the strategies they have pursued meaning that this approach is not limited to one specific strategy (Dür, 2008).

Measuring perceived influence does not, however, escape the problem of not having

a definite counterfactual: "Because the interviewees seldom have information about every variable that affected the policy's development, they rarely can accurately assess what influence a group or coalition of groups had in relation to the influence of other variables" (Smith, 1995, 121). Anticipated reactions are also a problem. If a party for example anticipates the reaction of a given interest group and takes their likely preferences into account prior to interacting with the group, the group might not realize or be made aware that it has been influential.

Interest groups can furthermore exaggerate or minimize their influence (Dür, 2008). The interest groups that participated in the survey used in paper III and IV were told that all responses were confidential and anonymous, however, which could weaken their incentives to distort their answers in order for example to appear successful in the eyes of their members or competitors. Lastly, respondents might not know or remember whether their group has influenced a given party (Pedersen, 2013). The interest group survey was, however, sent to respondents who likely have this knowledge (e.g., the person in charge of governmental affairs or the interest group leader). The influence question furthermore concerns the "current" legislative term which means that a respondent's memory does not have to extend very far back in time. In the event that respondents did not know or remember, "don't know" was a response alternative.

The third approach to measuring influence consists of assessing interest groups' preference attainment (Dür, 2008). Interest groups' ideal points are identified and compared to an outcome of interest to determine to what extent they get what they want. This can mean doing a (manual or automated) text analysis and examining the first draft and final version of e.g. a policy proposal to see which groups' ideal points the final proposal is closer to (Klüver, 2011; Bunea, 2013). Some also examine whether interest groups can get decision makers to *omit* parts of a proposal in final policy decisions (Chalmers & Malik, 2021). This approach has a relatively clear counterfactual (e.g., the first draft of a policy proposal) and is furthermore not limited to one interest group strategy (Dür, 2008).

It is, however, unclear whether the final outcome is closer to a given interest group's position because the group was successful in getting its way or because of other factors (i.e., the group's success is coincidental). An additional challenge arises from the possibility of counteractive lobbying:

> Even if an interest group does not manage to move an outcome into a preferred direction, this does not necessarily mean that the group lacked influence. It may simply be that it had to counter the lobbying effort of another group (other groups) and was influential in the sense that it avoided an even worse outcome (Dür, 2008, 561).

I tried a variation of this approach, using the unsupervised text scaling model Wordfish (Slapin & Proksch, 2008), to get at the positional proximity between parties and interest groups. While this resulted in seemingly valid position estimates for parties, the estimates

for the interest group positions were more problematic and I therefore abandoned this effort. This is similar to Bunea & Ibenskas (2015) who find that Wordfish estimates of interest group positions are less than ideal.

In addition to these three main approaches to measuring influence, a text reuse approach has emerged in recent years. Text reuse broadly involves either determining the degree of global similarity between two texts, akin to plagiarism tools, or local similarity where the most similar sequence within the texts are detected (Wilkerson & Casas, 2017). Garrett & Jansa (2015) and Burgess et al. (2016) use a text reuse approach to examine the similarities between interest group model legislation and US state legislation, while McKay (2018) investigates the likeness between interest group preferences and committee amendments to the 2009 American health reform legislation. Cross et al. (2021) use a text reuse approach to examine the more general impact of interest groups on legislative amendments of government bills. While this approach is similar to the preference attainment approach e.g. in that it relies on text input, it does not build on a spatial model in the same way; the actors' preferences and ideal points on specific policy dimensions are not mapped out.

I use a text reuse approach in paper V and measure parties' reuse of substantive arguments from interest groups (as reflected in their responses to government consultations) in their legislative speeches and committee remarks on specific policy proposals. More specifically, I use a local alignment approach that locates the optimal matching subset of a given interest group and party document.[3] The thesis shows how such an approach can be used in a semi-automated manner to measure interest group influence. One downside to this approach is that it will not detect "reuse" if parties substantially rework the interest group input (although it does capture reuse with slighter modifications). Substantial reworking may, however, also dull the signal parties send to interest groups which could deter them from doing this.

The approach furthermore does not directly get at whether interest groups affect parties' positions per se. Copying input does, however, clearly indicate that a given party listens to a given interest group and it directly affects the substantive *content* of the party's position. This is also a strength. The preference attainment approach, for example, mainly allows for determining interest groups' success in moving the entirety of e.g. a policy proposal (at least in its quantitative incarnation). Yet, "[i]t is plausible to imagine a situation in which a group manages to influence one specific aspect of a legislation that is important to it, but not the rest of the legislation" (Dür, 2008, 568-569). The text reuse approach allows for detecting this kind of influence.

Compared to the preference attainment approach, it is furthermore fairly certain that the input a party reuses originates from a given interest group (see paper V for details). This also partly addresses the issue of having a counterfactual: It is unlikely that a party would have acted in the exact same manner if the interest group whose input it reuses had

[3]There are no restrictions on the length of consultation submissions, while there are restrictions on e.g. the length of legislative speeches. Interest groups may hence go into greater detail than parties which can make the documents less comparable. Examining global alignment is therefore problematic.

not been active on the issue. In addition and unlike the attributed/perceived influence approach, the text reuse approach does not rely on actors' perceptions. Lastly, assuming that the interest groups' preferences are accurately reflected in consultation submissions and that their arguments are consistent,[4] parties may have received this information in a number of ways. A given interest group may for example have contacted a given party directly; the group might have voiced its arguments in the media; or the party can have read the responses to the government consultation itself. The text reuse approach hence allows for detecting this type of influence irrespective of interest group strategy. More generally, this approach makes it possible to examine a large number of interest groups and parties and a large number of specific policy proposals. This importantly allows for examining issue-level variation in interest groups' ability to influence parties.

5 Paper summaries

5.1 Paper I: All about the money? A cross-national study of parties' relations with trade unions in 12 western democracies

This paper examines the relationship between private and public party finance and party-interest group organizational ties. In terms of private donations, we expect that parties have stronger ties to interest groups that donate money. Such donations can help parties attract votes, and parties have an incentive to maintain ties to groups that donate to ensure that the groups continue to do so. In terms of public party finance, public party subsidies may constrain the relationship between group donations and ties. When parties receive generous public subsidies, they likely do not depend on private funding to the same extent and might hence not place the same value on donations compared to parties that receive less generous or no public subsidies. We therefore expect that the effect of groups' direct financial contributions on party-group ties is weaker when parties receive more public funding. Lastly, we expect that more restrictions on donations to parties are correlated with weaker party-group ties. Stricter regulations may make donations more sensitive and potentially costlier for the actors involved. If donations are capped or banned, regulations can also negatively affect the likelihood of groups donating money at all.

We use party and trade union survey data from the Left-of-centre Parties and Trade Unions across the World (LPTU) project to examine these expectations. The surveys were conducted in 12 established democracies.[5] As expected, we find that parties and trade unions are more likely to have stronger ties when the trade unions donate money. In Sweden, for example, the main trade union confederation (LO) donates to the Social Democratic Party (SAP), and SAP's central party organization and LO have nine (out of nine

[4]Dür et al. (2015) find that interest group positions coded based on consultation submissions correspond closely to government officials' placements of group positions, lending support to this assumption.

[5]Australia, Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the US.

possible) ties. We furthermore see that public party subsidies constrain this relationship. Parties generally have weaker ties to unions that donate money when they receive more generous public subsidies. Lastly, there is a negative relationship between restrictions on donations to parties and organizational ties. The median number of party-union ties in France – which prohibits trade union donations to parties and limits the amount individuals can donate – is for instance 1. In comparison, the median number of ties in the UK where there are no restrictions on donations is 8. Overall, the paper lends more systematic support to the idea that groups and parties are more likely to maintain closer relationships today when the groups donate money. It furthermore adds that the institutional setting that parties and interest groups operate in may affect party-interest group ties as it can create a more or less favorable environment for exchanges.

5.2 Paper II: Introducing the Party-Interest Group Relationships in Contemporary Democracies (PAIRDEM) Datasets

This research note gives an overview of the Party-Interest Group Relationships in Contemporary Democracies (PAIRDEM) datasets, and presents descriptive results regarding the organizational ties parties and interest groups maintain today. Using PAIRDEM survey data, we furthermore briefly examine the relationship between ideological distance and regular party-interest group leadership contact.

The PAIRDEM datasets partly consist of two party surveys conducted in 2016-2017 in 19 countries[6] and an interest group survey conducted in 2017-2018 in seven countries.[7] The datasets include an extensive range of indicators on party-interest group relationships, including a considerable number of items regarding party-interest group ties as well as other types of contact between the two actors. In addition, they among other things contain information about the ideological positions of interest groups, interest group donations to parties, and perceptions of influence.

Based on these surveys, we show that organizational ties between parties and interest groups are prevalent in established democracies today. The party surveys indicate that 92% of central party organizations and 90% of legislative party groups have at least one tie to interest groups. Event-based ties (e.g., invitations to meetings) are more common than more durable ties (e.g., permanent or temporary joint committees). Results from the interest group survey echo these findings. 60% of the groups have at least one organizational tie to a party, and event-based ties are again the most common type of ties. These descriptive findings add to the literature on parties and interest groups which generally has been limited to a few countries or specific interest groups and parties. We furthermore find that more

[6]Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. Note that parties in France and the US were invited to participate as well but none answered and they are therefore not counted here.

[7]Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the UK, and the US. Note that paper III and IV do not include the US because of missing data.

ideologically distant interest groups and parties are less likely to have regular leadership contact.

5.3 Paper III: Party goals and interest group influence on parties

This paper considers the relationship between parties' goals and interest group influence on parties. When interest groups try to influence parties, they meet another policy seeker. I therefore expect that interest groups are more likely to influence more ideologically similar parties. How parties prioritize their goals can also matter. Primarily office- and vote-seeking parties may have fewer policy constraints on what they consider useful input than policy purists. Compromising on policy positions to a certain extent can be acceptable as long as the input interest groups provide has a positive impact on their chances of appealing to the groups' constituents. Input from a larger pool of interest groups may therefore be of interest to these parties, and I thus expect that interest groups are more likely to influence parties that are more willing to compromise on policy. Lastly, I expect that these effects are mediated through the access interest groups have to parties.

Using mainly PAIRDEM interest group survey data, I test these hypotheses on 5,000 interest group-party observations from Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and the UK. I find support for the hypotheses. Interest groups are more likely to perceive that they influence parties they are ideologically similar to as well as parties that are more willing to compromise on policy.[8] Access furthermore seems to be an important mechanism that connects ideological proximity and parties' willingness to compromise on policy to interest group influence. The paper hence indicates that interest groups seem to influence parties and their positions to some extent. It furthermore contributes to the literature on interest group influence at large by highlighting that actors of the same type can differ in ways that affect interest groups' likelihood of wielding influence.

[8] I note in this paper that multicollinearity is not a problem. To elaborate, the VIF values are all below 2, i.e., far below all the standard thresholds for what constitutes multicollinearity. This may be somewhat surprising in the case of the willingness to compromise and party nicheness measures but the bivariate correlation between these two variables is not very strong (r = -0.26, p-value = 0.11, N = 39 parties). This may partly be because I use Bischof's (2017) nicheness measure which considers parties' actual emphasis on different niche issues at particular points in time. This is preferable to the more "standard" time-invariant party family measure of nicheness where "a green party will always remain a niche party, a social democratic party will always remain a mainstream party" meaning that "even if parties significantly change their offer, parties will always stay a niche party or mainstream party, respectively, unless parties switch from one party family to another" (Bischof, 2017, 223). Paper III includes several parties that would be classified as niche parties based on the party family they belong to but that are not especially niche in terms of their emphasis on issues vis-à-vis other parties in the same party system. The Greens in Germany for instance emphasizes environmental issues but 1) the other German parties also talk about the environment, and 2) the Greens talks a fair amount about other issues in its platform as well. When one considers the emphasis the party and its competitors actually place on niche issues, the Greens is hence not a particularly pronounced niche party in the 2010s.

5.4 Paper IV: Party-Interest Group Ties and Patterns of Political Influence

This paper asks whether organizational ties affect one-sided interest group influence on parties as well as mutual party-interest group influence. We first of all expect that interest groups are more likely to influence parties they have stronger ties to. This is partly because ties allow interest groups to monitor that parties deliver on their promises, and partly because ties can further increase the mutual understanding and trust between parties and interest groups. Second, we expect that stronger ties increase the likelihood of mutual party-interest group influence. Regular interactions with interest groups also allow parties to present their own ideas and perspectives to the groups, and both actors may approach their interactions as deliberations where they share and discuss arguments. This may inspire changes in both actors' positions.

We examine these hypotheses using PAIRDEM interest group survey data. Controlling for a range of different alternative explanations, including interest group donations to parties and various interest group and party characteristics, we find a positive association between organziational ties and interest group influence on parties. This is the case whether we consider both durable and event-based ties, consider only durable or only event-based ties, or if we consider regular leadership contact. We moreover find that stronger ties are associated with a higher likelihood of mutual influence. This highlights that influence can be more dynamic than how it is usually portrayed in the literature on interest group influence. Parties are active participants in their interactions with interest groups, and closer party-interest group relationships likely involve give-and-take. The findings furthermore imply that certain interest groups may function as enduring intermediaries between voters and parties.

5.5 Paper V: When Do Political Parties Listen to Interest Groups?

This paper asks when parties listen to interest groups and adopt their input. To answer this, I examine Norwegian parties' parliamentary speeches and committee remarks for 88 specific policy proposals from 2005 to 2015. In contrast to paper III and IV, this makes makes it possible to include issue-specific explanations. First, parties are less likely to be held electorally accountable for their positions on less publicly salient issues. This can give them greater leeway to cater to interest groups, and I expect that parties are more likely to adopt more interest group input when issues are less salient. Second, parties may be particularly worried about losing their competitive edge on issues they emphasize more than their competitors. Listening to interest groups can be one way to continue to stay ahead, and they may hence be more likely to adopt more interest group input on issues they emphasize. Third, listening to groups that are part of a broader coalition can come with fewer risks meaning that parties are expected to be more likely to adopt more input from interest groups that are part of a larger and/or more coordinated coalition. Lastly, opposition parties may have fewer constraints and greater incentives to listen to interest

groups than government parties and therefore be more likely to adopt more interest group input.

Examining more than 25,000 interest group-party pairs and using a text reuse approach, I find that all the Norwegian parties engage in the practice of adopting input from interest groups. The results furthermore lend support to the hypotheses. These findings add to the party position literature by showing when interest groups are more likely to influence the substantive arguments parties use. I moreover again show that considering differences between the actors that interest groups try to influence can be important which adds to the literature on interest group influence at large. Methodologically, the paper furthermore contributes to this literature by outlining how a specific text reuse approach can be used to measure interest group influence.

6 Future research

While the individual papers outline several specific avenues for future research, I highlight two more general avenues here. First, this thesis derives its findings from observational studies. One challenge in this regard is endogeneity: whether the independent variables explain the dependent variable or vice versa. For example, paper I proposes that interest group donations explain ties and we find support for this using cross-sectional data. Ties may also explain donations, however, as interest groups can be more interested in donating money to parties they regularly interact with. Similarly in paper IV, ties may explain influence but influence may also explain ties – if a party regularly listens to an interest group, this can increase the group's interest in strengthening its ties to that party. Moreover, parties' willingness to compromise on policy (paper III) and parties' issue emphasis (paper V) can affect interest groups' ability to wield influence, but interest group influence may also reinforce parties' willingness to compromise and their emphasis on issues. The papers address endogeneity by measuring – as far as possible – the independent variables before the dependent variable in time.

Panel data would, however, be better at mitigating endogeneity concerns and would furthermore shed valuable light on potentially reinforcing dynamics. Collecting and examining such data is hence one avenue for future research. One way to collect panel data on party-interest group ties is to conduct surveys at different points in time. Some interest groups furthermore report on their contacts with political parties (and other political actors) in their yearly reports, and these reports are hence another source for information over time – albeit probably less detailed information with more potential biases compared to surveys. Examining the trajectories of specific party-interest group pairs and their influence on each other in more qualitative, comparative case studies is another option.

A second avenue for future research is to examine other connections between interest groups and parties. At the individual level, for example, investigating personnel overlaps between interest groups and parties could be interesting. Existing research on personnel overlaps focuses on the careers of politicians (e.g., Eggers & Hainmueller, 2009; Claveria &

Verge, 2015; Palmer & Schneer, 2015; Baturo & Arlow, 2018) and government officials (e.g., Etzion & Davis, 2008; Vidal et al., 2012). Some examine the benefits of recruiting such individuals (Faccio, 2006; Goldman et al., 2009; Luechinger & Moser, 2014) and specifically whether interest groups are more likely to see their preferred policy outcomes enacted when their lobbyists are former politicians or bureaucrats (Baumgartner et al., 2009; Lazarus & McKay, 2012; Lerner, 2018). While the party-interest group literature notes that personnel overlaps exist (Sundberg, 2001; Allern, 2010; Bellucci & Heath, 2011; F. J. Christiansen, 2012; Allern & Bale, 2017), we know little about the effects of such ties. Personnel overlaps can increase communication at the individual level between parties and interest groups (Vidal et al., 2012), and a socialization mechanism could furthermore be in play (Dal Bó, 2006). Examining these types of individual-level ties is in other words one way to move the literature on parties and interest groups forward.

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